

A DOOR CAN BE BEATEN DOWN FROM EITHER SIDE

i catch norman mailer on this late-night talk-show called one-on-one.

it should be renamed the george orwell hour because it's strictly big brother stuff: you never see the interviewer, just hear his inquisitional, star-chamber interrogation, as the subject writhes on the hot seat.

but anyway, the questions are those infuriating old standbys that are always asked of writers and never of anyone else:

- (1) why do you write?
- (2) do you write for money?
- (3) if you don't make money,
why do you keep on writing?
- (4) if you do make money,
how can you claim you don't
write for money ...

mailer tried to answer them
and, as usual, his honesty got him into jams.

i have a great admiration
for mailer and his works,
but he gets himself into these pockets,
by wanting publicity in the first place.
whereas bukowski, since he does not seek out
interviews, readings, public opinions,
can, when he's asked something stupid,
simply intone, "next question!"

bukowski manages on a lot less money than mailer,
but he's also learned the law of reverse psychology:

convince them that you can genuinely do without them
and they won't be able to leave you alone.

THE HENNY YOUNGMAN OF CREATIVE WRITING

"i can't believe," he tells them,
"how much talent there is in this room ...

and that's not even counting
any of you!"